

Proposed California Desert Conservation Area Plan Amendment
and Final Environmental Impact Statement
for the Coachella Valley, California

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is a federal agency responsible for managing the public lands in accordance with federal law, regulation and policy in order to sustain the health, diversity and productivity of the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations. The Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA), BLM's organic act, directs the BLM to prepare land use plans which provide guidance, with public input, on how the public lands are to be managed. All subsequent activities on the BLM-managed public lands must be in conformance with the approved land use plan. The *California Desert Conservation Area Plan* (CDCA Plan, 1980, as amended) provides land use plan guidance for the California Desert Conservation Area.

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) manages approximately 28 percent (330,516 acres) of the total federal and non-federal land base in the Coachella Valley planning area (1,195,057 acres). The Coachella Valley planning area (Figure 1-2) is located approximately 100 miles east of Los Angeles in central Riverside County, plus a small portion in San Bernardino County.

This California Desert Conservation Area (CDCA) Plan Amendment for the Coachella Valley was developed in partnership with the local jurisdictions of the Coachella Valley, special interest groups, and State and Federal agencies, in support of the 1996 memorandum of understanding and the 1991 statewide biodiversity agreement. The BLM State Director is delegated to approve the Proposed Plan. Citizens who feel adversely affected by the Proposed Plan may protest those proposed decisions to the Director of the BLM in accordance with the protest procedures outlined in Title 43 Code of Federal Regulations Part 1610.5-2. **Written protests must be filed with the Director on or before November 18, 2002.**

A. Purpose and Need

The BLM in the Coachella Valley planning area has a need:

- 1) to provide for multiple use and sustainable development of the public lands while making progress towards healthy, properly functioning ecosystems;
- 2) to provide for the recovery of federal and state listed species;
- 3) to avoid future listings of sensitive species;
- 4) to provide recreational opportunities on the public lands;
- 5) to make available mineral and energy resources on the public lands; and
- 6) to work collaboratively with the local jurisdictions to facilitate land management consistency, management effectiveness and cost-efficiency across jurisdictional boundaries.

The purpose of this plan amendment is to develop a general plan of action (in accordance with Title 43 *Code of Federal Regulations* Part 1610) for the BLM-managed public lands that will meet the aforementioned needs while at the same time:

- 1) minimizing resource use conflicts;
- 2) not unduly burdening BLM resources and funding capability, including those for maintenance activities;
- 3) ensuring actions are manageable and can be implemented relative to the urban/wildland interface and the public/private interface;
- 4) providing for coordination with the members of the public, local jurisdictions, State and other Federal agencies to garner the public support needed to effectively implement the plan.

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B. Issues Addressed

The following planning issues have been identified for examination in the Coachella Valley CDCA Plan Amendment. These issues were developed with input from BLM staff and management, members of the public through public scoping, and close coordination with the local jurisdictions, State and other Federal agencies.

1. What indicators may be used to measure and monitor progress towards healthy, properly functioning ecosystems on the BLM-managed public lands?
2. Which rivers in the Coachella Valley are eligible and suitable to recommend for Wild and Scenic River designation?
3. What land uses and recreational opportunities in Peninsular Ranges bighorn sheep habitat are compatible with promoting recovery of bighorn sheep?
4. What opportunities for motorized-vehicle access, mineral extraction and energy projects are available while avoiding future listings of sensitive species, and minimizing impacts to cultural resources and Native American values?
5. How should the branded horses in the Indian Canyons which cross both Tribal and BLM jurisdictional boundaries be most effectively and efficiently managed?
6. Are the Wild Horse and Burro Herd Management Area designations in the Coachella Valley appropriate in light of the current herd levels, potential habitat use conflicts with bighorn sheep, and the checkerboard public land ownership pattern?
7. Is grazing in Whitewater Canyon an appropriate use in light of the checkerboard public land ownership pattern and available legal access across private land?
8. How can the interface between the Mecca Hills and Orocopia Mountains Wildernesses and off-highway vehicle use areas be managed to provide recreation opportunity and minimize intrusions into Wilderness?
9. What BLM land use allocations/designations are needed to facilitate consistency with the Coachella Valley Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan and to identify compatible uses within the reserve system?

C. Planning Criteria

Planning criteria are “sideboards” which guide development of the California Desert Conservation Area Plan amendment, to ensure it is tailored to the issues and to avoid unnecessary data collection and analyses. In addition to the standard suite of Federal laws, regulations, Executive Orders, Manual guidance and Bureau policies which guide all BLM planning and environmental review documents, the following criteria were specifically established to guide development of the California Desert Conservation Area (CDCA) Plan Amendment for the Coachella Valley:

- 1) This CDCA Plan Amendment for the Coachella Valley shall be completed by December 31, 2002.
- 2) As this Coachella Valley planning effort is an amendment to and not a revision of the CDCA Plan (1980, as amended), any CDCA plan elements not addressed nor specifically changed in this plan amendment shall remain extant and in effect.
- 3) The planning boundary for the Northern and Eastern Colorado Desert (NECO) Plan overlaps the eastern portion of the Coachella Valley planning boundary. BLM staff working on the Coachella Valley plan amendment shall coordinate with staff working on the NECO Plan to ensure consistency between the two plans.
- 4) The planning boundary for the West Mojave Plan overlaps the northwest portion of the Coachella Valley planning boundary. BLM staff working on the Coachella Valley plan amendment shall coordinate with staff working on the West Mojave Plan to ensure consistency between the two plans.
- 5) Any proposals promulgated through this Coachella Valley planning effort shall be in compliance with the California Desert Protection Act of 1994 and the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains National Monument Act of 2000.

ALTERNATIVES

A. General Description of each Alternative.

Each alternative is arranged by plan element. This particular suite of plan elements for which BLM is proposing new decisions, were selected based on the issues and concerns expressed by the public during public scoping. The alternatives describe different approaches for managing a particular plan element, labeled Alternative A, Alternative B, Alternative C and Alternative D. Alternatives A through C represent an array of options ranging from less restrictive land use (A) to more restrictive (C). Alternative D is the “no action” alternative

As this is a plan amendment and not a revision, most of the guidance and land use plan decisions established in the *California Desert Conservation Area Plan* (1980 as amended) shall remain extant. The land use plan action alternatives identify specific proposed changes to the CDCA Plan, and are not meant to replace all decisions for a particular plan element.

B. Plan Goals Common to All Alternatives.

Goals define a future desired condition or outcome for a resource or program, developed out of the various issues identified during the informal and formal public scoping process for this Plan Amendment. Goals serve as benchmarks for determining land use plan conformance, as plans are implemented. The following proposed goals are a supplement to the goals presented in the California Desert Conservation Area Plan (1980, as amended)

1. Ensure a balance of multiple use and sustainable public land uses with progress toward attaining healthy, properly functioning ecosystems.
2. Achieve recovery of listed species, and manage species to avoid future listings.
3. Maintain a network of motorized vehicle routes necessary to meet recreational and other needs while minimizing affects to air quality and other resource values, in order to ensure compliance with the Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act, the Endangered Species Act and other environmental laws.
4. Establish and maintain a network of hiking, biking and equestrian trails that provide opportunities for year-round recreation.
5. Make available public lands to support community infrastructure needs for southern California including energy production, mineral extraction and utilities, while minimizing resource use conflicts and promoting species recovery in the plan area as a whole.
6. Work in collaboration with the U.S. Forest Service, Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians, the State of California and local jurisdictions to conserve the values of, and manage land uses in, the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains National Monument.
7. Work in collaboration with the Torres Martinez Band of Cahuilla Indians to manage wetland habitats in the Whitewater Delta north of the Salton Sea.
8. Protect the free-flowing characteristics and outstandingly remarkable values of rivers that are eligible and may be suitable for Wild and Scenic River designation, and ensure their tentative classifications as “wild,” “scenic” or “recreational” are not affected.
9. Participate as a federal land management partner with the local Coachella Valley jurisdictions, and contribute to development and implementation of the Coachella Valley Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan.
10. Work cooperatively with the Bureau of Reclamation and the local water agencies to help implement California’s water management program.
11. Develop an overall strategy for managing the public lands which is adaptable over time based on the results of resource monitoring in order to effectively achieve the aforementioned goals.

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C. Land Use Plan Alternatives.

Table ES-1 presents a summary description of the various alternatives for each plan element. Please refer to the full text version of the Proposed Coachella Valley CDCA Plan Amendment and Final environmental impact statement for a complete (and therefore more accurate) description of each alternative plan element. Not all of the plan elements have four different alternatives. Some plan elements have only three or two alternatives.

D. Proposed Plan Amendment (Preferred Alternative).

Wild and Scenic Rivers. River segments on BLM-managed lands within the following areas (Figure 2-1) are determined eligible for inclusion into the National Wild and Scenic River System (NWSRS) with the following tentative classifications:

Table 2-1: River Segments Determined Eligible

Area	River Channel	Tentative Classification	Length (miles, BLM lands only)		Location
Whitewater Canyon	Main	Wild	6.5 (wilderness)		T1S R3E, Sec. 30 T2S R3E, Sec. 4, 5, 6, 9, 10, 15
		Recreational	1.6 (non-wilderness)		T2S 3E, Sec. 15, 22, 23, 26
Mission Creek	Main	Wild	3.1 (wilderness)		T1S R3E, Sec. 16, 22, 28
		Recreational	2.1 wilder- ness	1.4 non- wilder- ness	T1S R3E, Sec. 34 T2S R3E, Sec. 2 T2S R4E, Sec. 17, 18
	North Fork	Wild	0.4 (wilderness)		T1N R3E, Sec. 32 T1S R3E, Sec. 4
	South Fork	Wild	1.1 (wilderness)		T1S R3E, Sec. 8
	West Fork	Recreational	2.9 (wilderness)		T1S R3E, Sec. 34 T2S R3E, Sec. 2, 3, 11
Palm Canyon	Main	Scenic	1.2 (non-wilderness)		T5S R4E, Sec. 36

Manage public lands within 1/4 mile of the identified river segments to protect their free-flowing characteristics; protect, and to the degree practicable enhance, the Outstandingly Remarkable Values (ORVs) which contribute to their eligibility; and ensure that their eligibility or tentative classification will not be affected before a determination of their suitability or non-suitability as Wild and Scenic Rivers can be made. ORVs are identified in the documentation of eligibility (Appendix B). Existing protective management measures are also described in the same appendix.

Subsequent to identification of eligible river segments through this planning process, determinations of suitability would be analyzed in a separate reporting package, including a plan amendment and legislative environmental impact statement. River segments on BLM-managed lands in Little Morongo Canyon, Big Morongo Canyon, and Whitewater Canyon south of Bonnie Bell were assessed and determined to be ineligible for inclusion into the NWSRS.

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Visual Resource Management. Based on the general characteristics of the BLM-managed public lands within the Coachella Valley, Visual Resource Management (VRM) classifications would be assigned as follows (Figure 2-2):

Table 2-2: Visual Resource Management Classifications

AREA DESCRIPTION	VRM CLASS	ACREAGE
BLM-managed lands within the Santa Rosa and San Geronio Wilderness Additions	Class 1	95,461
BLM-managed lands within ACECs and the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains National Monument (except for designated wilderness which is Class 1)	Class 2	97,539
BLM-managed lands within CVMSHCP conservation areas, except for wind energy facilities, and sand and gravel mining sites (see below)	Class 2	
BLM-managed lands associated with existing and future development of wind energy facilities, and sand and gravel mining sites, whether inside or outside the CVMSHCP conservation areas	Class 4	12,852
Remaining BLM-managed lands, other than those in the NECO overlap area	Class 4	
BLM-managed lands within the NECO overlap area	Not assigned	131,376

Land Health Standards. Adopt the rangeland health standards developed for livestock grazing in consultation with the California Desert District Advisory Council, for use as regional land health standards. These regional land health standards would apply to all BLM lands and programs, and would be implemented through terms and conditions of permits, leases and other authorizations, actions, resource monitoring, assessments undertaken in accordance with BLM's land use plans. BLM would seek to incorporate these standards into the multi-jurisdictional monitoring program for the CVMSHCP, and to coordinate with local jurisdictions in monitoring and assessment of land health. These standards may not be used to permanently prohibit allowable uses established by law, regulation or land use plans.

1. **Soils.** Soils exhibit infiltration and permeability rates that are appropriate to soil type, climate, geology, landform, and past uses. Adequate infiltration and permeability of soils allow accumulation of soil moisture necessary for optimal plant growth and vigor, and provide a stable watershed. As indicated by:
 - Canopy and ground cover are appropriate for the site;
 - There is diversity of plant species with a variety of root depths;
 - Litter and soil organic matter are present at suitable sites;
 - Maintain the presence of microbiotic soil crusts that are in place;
 - Evidence of wind or water erosion does not exceed natural rates for the site; and
 - Hydrologic and nutrient functions maintained by permeability of soil and water infiltration are appropriate for precipitation.
2. **Native Species.** Healthy, productive and diverse habitats for native species, including special status species (Federal T&E, Federal proposed, Federal candidates, BLM sensitive, or California State T&E, and CDD UPAs) are maintained in places of natural occurrence. As indicated by:
 - Photosynthetic and ecological processes continue at levels suitable for the site, season, and precipitation regimes;
 - Plant vigor, nutrient cycle, and energy flow are maintaining desirable plants and ensuring reproduction and recruitment;
 - Plant communities are producing litter within acceptable limits;
 - Age class distribution of plants and animals are sufficient to overcome mortality fluctuations;

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- Distribution and cover of plant species and their habitats allow for reproduction and recovery from localized catastrophic events;
- Alien and noxious plants and wildlife do not exceed acceptable levels;
- Appropriate natural disturbances are evident; and
- Populations and their habitats are sufficiently distributed to prevent the need for listing special status species.

3. **Riparian/ Wetland and Stream Function.** Wetland systems associated with subsurface, running, and standing water, function properly and have the ability to recover from major disturbances. Hydrologic conditions are maintained. As indicated by:
- Vegetative cover will adequately protect banks, and dissipate energy during peak water flows;
 - Dominant vegetation is an appropriate mixture of vigorous riparian species;
 - Recruitment of preferred species is adequate to sustain the plant community;
 - Stable soils store and release water slowly;
 - Plant species present indicate soil moisture characteristics are being maintained;
 - There is minimal cover of invader/shallow-rooted species, and they are not displacing deep-rooted native species;
 - Maintain shading of stream courses and water sources for riparian dependent species;
 - Stream is in balance with water and sediment being supplied by the watershed;
 - Stream channel size and meander is appropriate for soils, geology, and landscape; and
 - Adequate organic matter (litter and standing dead plant material) is present to protect the site and to replenish soil nutrients through decomposition.
4. **Water quality.** Surface and groundwater complies with objectives of the Clean Water Act and other applicable water quality requirements, including meeting the California State standards. Best Management Practices would be implemented to help achieve these standards. Achievement of standards would be indicated by:
- Chemical constituents, water temperature, nutrient loads, fecal coliform, turbidity, suspended sediment and dissolved oxygen do not exceed the applicable requirements.
 - Achievement of the standards for riparian, wetlands and water bodies;
 - Aquatic organisms and plants (e.g., macro invertebrates, fish, algae and plants) indicate support for beneficial uses; and
 - Monitoring results or other data that show water quality is meeting the standards.

Air Quality. Implement the following air quality management prescriptions. A more detailed description is provided in Appendix C.

- Reduce the number of unpaved routes upwind of sensitive receptors.
- Manage unauthorized off-road use by posting signs and enforcing closures. Provide opportunities for OHV use away from sensitive receptors.
- Install sand fencing where fencing can assist in reducing PM10 emissions and maintain habitat for sand dependent species.
- Authorized uses would include terms and conditions to minimize fugitive dust emissions, based on the Coachella Valley PM10 State Implementation Plan. Proposed projects with the potential to exceed National Ambient Air Quality Standards shall include in the site-specific environmental analysis, a dust control plan prepared in coordination with the South Coast Air Quality Management District.

Multiple-Use Classification. Classify BLM-managed lands within wilderness areas as Multiple-Use Class "C" (Controlled Use). Classify non-wilderness BLM-managed lands within conservation areas (see Glossary for definition) as Multiple-Use Class "L" (Limited Use). Classify remaining BLM-managed lands as Multiple-Use Class "M" (Moderate Use). (Figure 2-3a).

Habitat Conservation Objectives. For each of the eight vegetation community types (Figure 2-4), the habitat conservation objectives outlined in Table 2-4 would be used to assess compatible uses and to develop appropriate mitigation measures within conservation areas on BLM-managed lands. Future

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activities would be required to conform to the habitat conservation objectives established for a particular community type within the conservation areas. Activities which cannot meet the habitat conservation objectives, either through avoidance or mitigation measures, would be disallowed. New utilities within utility corridors would be designed to avoid impacts to sensitive plants, endemic species and their habitats, and significant cultural resources.

Application of the habitat conservation objectives would utilize BLM's normal processes for evaluating and managing proposed land uses. That is, upon receipt of an application for a proposal, BLM would conduct interdisciplinary analysis to determine the effects of the proposal and perform the necessary consultations with other agencies as part of its decision-making processes. The analysis team would use the habitat conservation objectives as both a standard for assessing the compatibility of the proposal within conservation areas, and as a basis for development of mitigation measures.

Fire Management. Response to wildland fire is based on ecological, social and legal consequences of the fire. The circumstances under which a fire occurs, and the likely consequences on firefighter and public safety and welfare, natural and cultural resources, and other values to be protected dictate the appropriate management response to the fire. Based on these factors, the following fire management categories are identified for the following vegetation communities (Figure 2-5):

Fire Management Category A. The following communities are areas where fire would not be desired at all: sand dunes and sand fields. Immediate suppression is a critical element of fire management in these desert environments because fire historically has never played a large role in the development and maintenance of the ecosystem.

Fire Management Category B. The following vegetation communities are areas where wildfire is not desired: (1) desert scrub, (2) desert alkali scrub, (3) marsh, (4) dry wash woodland, pinyon-juniper woodland and mesquite, and (5) riparian areas. Immediate suppression is a critical element of fire management in these desert communities because fire historically has never played a large role in the development and maintenance of these communities. Prescribed fire may be utilized as a resource management tool in very select situations, for example to effectively manage exotic vegetation.

Fire Management Category C. (1) Oak woodlands and forest communities and (2) chaparral communities are areas where wildland fire (including prescribed burning) may be allowed. The following constraints must be considered in determining the appropriate level of suppression: (1) emphasize protection of life and property, especially trail users and montane communities, (2) evaluate potential beneficial or adverse effects on threatened and endangered species habitat, especially endemic species, (3) evaluate potential for adverse effects to significant or sensitive cultural and other natural resources, (4) promote mosaic pattern of vegetation resulting from different fire histories within the larger landscape, (5) protect areas so that they do not burn at less than 15 year intervals.

Special Area Designations. Designate the Coachella Valley Wildlife Habitat Management Area (WHMA) to include BLM-managed lands within the CVMSHCP conservation areas which are outside existing ACECs, Wilderness Areas, National Monuments, proposed NECO Chuckwalla WHMA, and freeway interchanges in the NECO Plan overlap area (Figure 2-6a). Existing ACEC boundaries would remain unchanged.

Land Tenure: Exchange & Sale Criteria. BLM lands in the Coachella Valley would generally be retained in public ownership. The following criteria would be applied in evaluating the suitability of land exchanges and sales. Land sales would only be conducted if reasonable opportunities for land exchange are not available in order to provide land base in support of the CVMSHCP. Land exchanges and sales may be considered if they would:

1. Facilitate effective and efficient management of conservation areas;
2. Be conducted in coordination with the local jurisdictions;

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3. Would result in a net benefit to the conservation areas or divert intensive uses away from sensitive areas;
4. Not remove rare species nor their habitat, nor remove rare habitat types from conservation management;
5. Not remove eligible historic properties from conservation management; &
6. Not divest of public domain lands which eliminates a significant public benefit.

Proposed exchanges or sales would be conducted in coordination with the local jurisdictions to ensure the proposed exchange would meet the larger multi-jurisdictional objectives of habitat conservation and support to local communities in the Coachella Valley. All land exchanges and sales would be subject to consultation requirements under the Endangered Species Act. Disposal of specific parcels through exchange or sale may require biological or cultural field surveys in order to complete consultation. Site specific application of the criteria and determinations identifying necessary surveys would occur once project proposals are received.

Land Tenure: Acquisition Criteria. Acquisition proposals are discretionary Bureau actions, depending on overall Bureau priorities and resource capabilities at the time. Acquisition proposals would be required to meet the following criteria. Proposed acquisitions would:

1. Be acquired from willing sellers only;
2. Be conducted in coordination with the local jurisdictions;
3. Benefit the Coachella Valley conservation areas by a) directly augmenting public ownership in a sensitive area or b) diverting uses away from sensitive areas by providing opportunities elsewhere for recreation use including hiking, horseback riding, bicycling, off-highway vehicle use, and other activities; or
4. Improve the presence of a variety of biotic or abiotic habitat components under conservation management.

Management of Acquired Lands and Formerly Withdrawn Lands, including OHV Designations.

Lands acquired by purchase, donation or lands removed from withdrawal status shall be managed in accordance with the CDCA Plan, as amended and the applicable land and mineral laws upon issuance of an opening order published in the *Federal Register*. Lands located within the boundaries of ACECs or any other area having an administrative designation established through the land use planning process shall become part of the area within which they are located and managed accordingly upon issuance of the opening order.

Off-highway vehicle area designations would be applied to lands acquired through purchase, donation, or exchange through the following criteria as part of this CDCA Plan Amendment:

- Lands acquired within Congressionally designated wilderness boundaries, would be designated “closed” as per the Wilderness Act of 1964, the California Desert Protection Act, or other applicable legislation.
- Lands acquired within Big Morongo Canyon and Dos Palmas ACECs would be designated as “limited”; casual motorized-vehicle travel would be restricted to routes designated “open.”
- Lands acquired within the Coachella Valley, Willow Hole-Edom Hill, and Indian Avenue Preserves would be designated “limited” consistent with the Coachella Valley Preserve System Management Plan and Decision Record (November, 1995); casual motorized-vehicle travel would be restricted to routes designated “open.”
- Lands acquired within the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains National Monument, and within the scope of this CDCA Plan Amendment, would be designated as “limited” as per the National Monument Act (Public Law 106-351, October 24, 2000); casual motorized-vehicle travel would be restricted to routes designated “open.”
- Lands acquired within designated “open” areas would be designated as “open.”
- All other lands acquired within the planning area covered by this plan amendment, and otherwise currently designated as “limited,” would also be designated as “limited.” Casual motorized-vehicle travel would be restricted to routes designated “open.”

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Existing routes on lands acquired by BLM would be designated through the following criteria as part of this CDCA Plan Amendment:

- If the existing route provides the only access to private property, the route would be designated “limited” or “open” depending on the needs of the property owner and consideration of the other criteria below.
- If the existing route is the continuation of a County-maintained road across the acquired parcel, and is needed to provide connectivity of the road across public or private lands, then the route would be designated “open.”
- If the route is a continuation of an existing “open” route on public lands that provides the only access or connectivity to another “open” route on adjacent public lands, the route would be designated “open.”
- If the acquired parcel is within the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains National Monument, a designated ACEC, or multi-jurisdictional preserve area, and if the existing route is not part of, or does not provide access or connectivity to, an existing “open” route in the special area or preserve, then the route would be “closed” per the existing management plan or record of decision.
- If a route on an acquired parcel within one of the above special management areas is an extension or segment of an existing “open” or “limited” route that provides access to public facilities or visitor services, then the route would have the same “open” or “limited” designation as the existing segments.
- If the route on an acquired parcel is a segment, or an extension, of a “closed” route on public lands, then the route would be “closed.”
- New routes constructed as part of a right-of-way or other authorization which would require that the route be closed to protect property or public safety, would be designated as “limited” or “closed” consistent with the appropriate plan of operation or right-of-way grant, and record of decision.
- New routes constructed for access to public use or visitor facilities, such as trailheads or interpretive sites, and authorized under an activity plan and record of decision, would be designated as “limited” or “open” consistent with the appropriate plan.
- Routes on acquired lands that are redundant or parallel to existing “open” routes (within 0.25 mile) would be closed to provide resource protection and attainment of PM10 air quality standards.
- Routes on acquired lands that are identified in the CVMSHCP or other multi-jurisdictional habitat conservation plan would be designated in accordance with the management prescriptions in the plan.
- Routes on acquired lands that have been designated as an OHV open area, would be designated “open.”
- Routes on acquired lands that have been designated as closed to OHV use, would be designated “closed” if the route does not serve an essential public purpose, provide the only access to private property, or fall within one of the above categories.

Communication Sites & Utilities. Facility design, site availability and use of public lands to support energy production and communications services would be consistent with habitat conservation. Windpark development would be permitted in designated areas (Figure 2-7) and new towers within existing communication sites on a space available basis and consistent with habitat conservation objectives using appropriate mitigation measures. Proposed utilities within designated utility corridors and within conservation areas may be considered, consistent with the habitat conservation objectives. Proposed utilities would be designed or mitigation measures imposed to ensure new utilities within conservation areas avoid impacts to sensitive plants, endemic species and their habitats, and to significant cultural resources.

Sand and Gravel Mining. Continue to provide sand and gravel and other mineral material resources to support road maintenance, infrastructure, housing construction and other community needs in the Coachella Valley. Mineral materials sales within the CVMSHCP conservation areas would be restricted to

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State of California Division of Mines and Geology classified and designated resource areas (Figure 2-7), and new mining proposals would be allowed if habitat conservation objectives could be met using appropriate mitigation measures. Outside the conservation areas, mining may be considered consistent with federal laws and regulations.

Livestock Grazing. Whitewater Canyon Allotment (Figure 2-8) management emphasis will be on the compatibility with (1) conservation objectives of the desert tortoise, arroyo toad, and riparian habitat values, and (2) use of, and access to, intermingled private lands. Grazing would continue as a permitted use until the lessee voluntarily relinquishes the permitted use and preference, at which time the allotment would become unavailable for grazing. Upon BLM's relinquishment acceptance, the BLM will, without further analysis or notice, not reissue the lease; remove the allotment designation; and assume any and all private interest in range improvements located on public lands.

Wild Horse and Burro Program. Retire Palm Canyon & Morongo Herd Management Areas. BLM parcels within and adjacent to the Palm Canyon HMA (T5S R4E and T4S R4E) would be transferred to the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians via land exchange, in accordance with the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains National Monument Act of 2000 (Figure 2-9).

Motorized Vehicle Area Designations.

- ▶ Establish an off-highway vehicle managed use area in the vicinity of Drop 31 which emphasizes opportunities for camping, trail riding and exploration along designated routes, trails and open washes. Adopt the off-highway vehicle management prescriptions set forth in the NECO Plan.
- ▶ Design and implement a network of open routes for the Drop 31 area that provides local touring options outside wilderness and connects to the regional system of open routes established under the NECO plan amendment. Designate the route system developed for the Drop 31 area through the Meccacopia Special Recreation Management Plan as "open."
- ▶ Seek to acquire lands from willing sellers to facilitate continued opportunity and effective management for vehicle-based camping and touring in the vicinity of Drop 31. The final boundaries of the vehicle recreation area may be affected by lands available for acquisition.
- ▶ Windy Point south of Highway 111 (357 acres of public lands) would be designated "closed" to off-highway vehicles. Motorized-vehicle use of this area would be limited to emergency services and administrative personnel during performance of official duties.
- ▶ Conservation areas and the remaining BLM-managed lands, except wilderness would be designated or remain "limited." Casual motorized-vehicle travel would be restricted to routes designated "open."
- ▶ Wilderness areas are closed to casual motorized-vehicle use by statute.
- ▶ BLM would initiate a public information effort to assist OHV users in identifying and locating the appropriate areas for various types of OHV recreation in the local area and the region, including identification of non-BLM lands where opportunities are available for such activities.
- ▶ Work with Riverside County and the OHV Recreation Division of the California Department of Parks and Recreation to establish an OHV recreation area in the southeastern portion of the Coachella Valley (in or adjacent to Section 22, T5S R8E). This site is Riverside County land, is adjacent to the county landfill, and contains desirable terrain for OHV recreation and is conveniently located off Interstate 10. An OHV "free-play" area at this location would serve as an outlet and opportunity for local off-highway vehicle users, which in turn would enhance effectiveness in managing areas closed to OHV use.
- ▶ If the OHV "free-play" area were to be acquired by BLM, the intent would be to designate the area as "open" in order to address the need to provide an outlet for this type of use in the Coachella Valley. More detailed analysis at this time concerning the final design, boundaries and management of the OHV "free-play" area is outside the scope of this Plan Amendment since the subject lands are not currently managed by BLM and sufficient information is not yet available to address those subjects. Additional information may be provided by the Coachella Valley MSHCP.

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Motorized Vehicle Route Designations. Routes within CVMSHCP conservation areas would be designated in accordance with habitat conservation objectives and air quality management strategy, while allowing for recreation opportunities (see Figure 2-11b; Appendix D, Table D-4). Routes outside the conservation areas would be designated “open” except for redundant routes (identified in Table D-4), which would be “closed” to minimize air quality non-attainment in the Coachella Valley. Short recreational spur roads west of the Indio air quality monitoring station would be closed.

Maintain the public route network as needed and seek legal access across private land parcels from willing sellers in areas designated for public recreation. Manage vehicle access in the Dunn Road area (including the Dry Wash route and routes in Palm Canyon, totaling 15 miles on public land) for administrative purposes such as flood control, law enforcement, search and rescue, and fire control, as well as controlled levels of permitted uses such as research and commercial recreation, subject to permission of private landowners for use of non-federal lands.

Existing gates would be maintained on Dunn Road and new gates would be installed to preclude unauthorized access from the Royal Carrizo area. Public land portions of Dunn Road, Dry Wash Road, and the access route from Royal Carrizo would be closed except for administrative and permitted access until bighorn sheep populations recover. The designation of these roads may be re-evaluated at that time. Permitted use may include limited research and recreational access by permit, contingent on acquiring access across private lands and compliance with the terms of a biological opinion. Motorized commercial recreational access would be confined to the fall months and both activities and the areas to be visited would be designed to avoid conflicts with bighorn sheep recovery, in consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Legal access to landowners and agencies may be provided through a right-of-way grant with terms and conditions based upon a biological opinion. Temporary landowner access may be authorized by permit.

Certain routes in Big Morongo Canyon Preserve/ACEC and Dos Palmas Preserve/ACEC were closed through a previous amendment to the CDCA Plan; the Record of Decision was signed in April 1998. These routes, totaling 25 miles, would remain closed under all alternatives and are not included in the mileage for which decisions would be made under this CDCA Plan Amendment. For a complete description of each route and map location, see Appendix D, Table D-2. Forty-five (45) miles of other routes on BLM-managed lands have not been available for public use over time. Many of these routes have been gated by rights-of-way holders as authorized through their grants (e.g., windfarm operators, Metropolitan Water District, Desert Water Agency) or closed through activity level decisions (e.g., routes in the Coachella Valley Preserve; decision record signed November 1995). Public access to portions of other routes on BLM-managed lands has been precluded by gates on non-BLM lands (e.g., southern portion of Dunn Road, route south of La Quinta Cove, routes accessing the southern portion of Carrizo Canyon), or precluded by posting of “no trespassing” signs by private landowners (e.g., northern portion of Dunn Road). These routes would be designated “closed” under all alternatives of this CDCA Plan Amendment. For a complete description of each route and map location, see Appendix D, Table D-3.

Special Recreation Management Areas. A Special Recreation Management Area which includes the Mecca Hills and Orocopia Mountains Wildernesses, Drop 31, and the Red Canyon Jeep Trail would be designated and named the Meccacopia Special Recreation Management Area (Figure 2-10b). Of the overall 125,441 acres, 90,304 acres of the proposed SRMA are public lands managed by the BLM. Part of the overall Meccacopia SRMA management strategy to be addressed through a Recreation Area Management Plan prepared for the SRMA includes the following:

- a) Protect wilderness values to include minimizing motorized vehicle and mechanized equipment intrusions into the Mecca Hills and Orocopia Mountains Wildernesses.
- b) Enhance the quality of motorized recreation on public lands surrounding the two wilderness areas and wildlife watering zones (see “d” below) by providing adequate facilities and management to direct use and protect environmental values.
- c) Enhance the quality of non-motorized recreation on public lands by minimizing the potential for conflicts with motorized vehicles, and providing adequate facilities and management to direct use and protect environmental values.

- d) Construct and maintain additional water sources with limited vehicle access to discourage bighorn sheep from using the Coachella Canal and to minimize conflicts with off-highway vehicle users. Development of water sources inside wilderness areas would be consistent with limits and guidelines established in the Northern and Eastern Colorado Desert Coordinated Management Plan (NECO Plan). Also per the NECO Plan, additional guzzlers in wilderness may be considered upon completion of the relevant meta-population plan by the California Department of Fish and Game. Development of wildlife water sources outside wilderness would be based on analysis and approval of site specific proposals developed in consultation with California Department of Fish and Game.

Recreation: Stopping, Parking, and Vehicle Camping. Stopping, parking, and vehicle camping would be allowed within 100 feet from the centerline of an approved route except where fenced. The following exception applies: Where wilderness boundaries are coincident with approved routes, stopping, parking, and vehicle camping must remain outside the wilderness boundary.

Recovery Strategy for Peninsular Ranges Bighorn Sheep. The proposed Recovery Strategy for Peninsular Ranges bighorn sheep emphasizes restoration of public lands and coordination of conservation efforts with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, California Department of Fish and Game, local jurisdictions, and non-government organizations to promote recovery of bighorn sheep. A combination of habitat improvement projects, management of land uses to avoid, reduce, or mitigate disturbance, and excluding bighorn sheep from the urban environment is proposed. The *Recovery Plan for Bighorn Sheep in the Peninsular Ranges, California (USFWS 2000)* was used in the development of this strategy. References to the Recovery Plan are in parentheses.

Objective A: Restore and manage habitat to promote recovery of bighorn sheep

- Acquire, or exchange to acquire, bighorn sheep habitat from willing landowners (Recovery Plan p. 75).
- Implement a fire management plan in fire adapted habitats to help maintain bighorn sheep habitat (Recovery Plan p. 78).
- Management of invasive weeds such as tamarisk, arundo, and fountain grass will continue to be a priority habitat management effort (Recovery Plan p. 77).
- Maintain existing water sources through tamarisk eradication and provide additional artificial water sources on public lands. Locations for artificial water sources would be carefully selected to reduce interactions between bighorn and the urban interface (Recovery Plan pp. 77 and 79).

Objective B: Manage land uses to avoid, reduce, or mitigate disturbance

- Manage aircraft activities to reduce or eliminate habitat fragmentation or interference with bighorn sheep resource use patterns (Recovery Plan p. 89).
- Manage road use on BLM-managed lands, consistent with the CDCA Plan (1980) as amended, to minimize habitat fragmentation or interference with bighorn sheep resource use patterns (Recovery Plan p. 89).
- Develop and implement education and public awareness programs (Recovery Plan pp. 104-107).
- Publish an annual report describing management, monitoring results, and management implications of research conducted on BLM-managed public lands.
- Reduce impacts to bighorn sheep (especially during the water stress and lambing season) using a combination of methods, including voluntary avoidance programs, closures, seasonal restrictions, and permit stipulations and mitigations. Projects emphasizing the least disturbing techniques available and practicable would be encouraged. Some level of disturbance to bighorn sheep may be permitted during water stress and lambing season to obtain information, resulting in more effective management of bighorn sheep and their habitat (Recovery Plan pp. 83-89).

Objective C: Manage bighorn sheep populations to promote recovery.

- Coordinate all management and monitoring efforts with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, California Department of Fish and Game, Coachella Valley Association of Governments, and local jurisdictions to ensure a landscape level approach to recovery of bighorn sheep populations.
- Make public lands available for species management by California Department of Fish and Game for activities, such as predator management, reintroduction and augmentation, conducted in coordination with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and local jurisdictions, and in accordance with the *Master Memorandum of Understanding between the California Department of Fish and Game and the Bureau of Land Management* (October 1993). (Recovery Plan pp. 92-94).
- Construct fences across public lands to exclude bighorn sheep from urban areas where there is a demonstrated problem. Projects would be coordinated with local jurisdictions, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the California Department of Fish and Game to ensure that water is available before sheep are excluded from urban areas known to provide water (Recovery Plan p.80).

Hiking, Biking & Equestrian Trails. Manage trail segments across public lands in coordination with members of the public, local jurisdictions, State and other Federal agencies to provide for a year-round suite of non-motorized recreation opportunities on interconnected trails in the Coachella Valley and surrounding mountains. Non-motorized uses of the public lands within the Coachella Valley planning area may be limited, including area and trail closures, as needed to protect sensitive resources. New trails which avoid impacts to sensitive resources and are developed in coordination with the community may be allowed.

E. Plan Maintenance.

BLM land use plans shall be maintained (43 CFR 1610.5-4) to further refine or document previously approved decisions incorporated into the plan. Several of BLM's CDCA Plan Amendment alternatives are contingent upon the conservation boundary established through the CVMSHCP, for which BLM is utilizing the proposed conservation boundary which has been agreed to by the wildlife agencies and the Coachella Valley Association of Governments as of the date of the Record of Decision for the BLM CDCA Plan Amendment. The final, approved CVMSHCP boundary would be updated in the CDCA Plan Amendment through plan maintenance as uses or restrictions on the BLM-managed public lands would not change substantially. In the event that the CVMSHCP is not completed, the land use designations established for the BLM-managed lands through this CDCA Plan Amendment would remain extant, until such time a subsequent CDCA Plan Amendment was deemed necessary.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

A summary of the anticipated impacts of each of the alternatives for the Coachella Valley CDCA is presented in table ES-2. Refer to the full text of version of this document for a complete description of potential impacts.

THE COLLABORATIVE PLANNING PROCESS

Throughout this planning process, the BLM has strived to create an open planning process, such that opportunities for public input are not be limited to the minimum requirements set by the BLM planning regulations and National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA). This planning process has also been deliberately designed to engage and involve local government, state agencies, other federal agencies, and Indian tribes to a very high level.

This Coachella Valley CDCA Plan Amendment is being developed in partnership with the local jurisdictions, State and Federal agencies, and private interests, in tandem with the multi-jurisdictional Coachella Valley Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan/Natural Communities Conservation Plan (CVMSHCP). There have been numerous public meetings since 1996, held jointly with the CVMSHCP, to discuss development of the Coachella Valley CDCA Plan Amendment. Policy Action Group meetings are being conducted monthly as part of the joint CDCA Plan Amendment/CVMSHCP planning effort. The Policy Action Group meetings are regularly attended by representatives of local jurisdictions, Native American Tribes, State and Federal government agencies, interest groups and private citizens. Numerous additional meetings and working group sessions were held to focus on issues of particular interest, such as development of a trails management plan and public input on inventories of motorized vehicle routes.

The Draft Coachella Valley CDCA Plan Amendment was available for a 90-day public review period from June 7 through September 5, 2002. Oral comments were accepted at three public meetings held in July of 2002, as well at meetings of the Monument Advisory Committee for the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains National Monument and the Desert Advisory Council. At the end of the comment period, BLM received 23 letters, electronic mail messages or facsimiles. Over 200 comments were extracted from the various letters, electronic mail messages, and public meeting transcripts. These comments are presented in Appendix G as "public concern" statements. Staff evaluated the public concern statements, and prepared written responses, also presented in Appendix G. Based on the public comments received, BLM made various changes to the draft plan amendment and draft EIS, which are reflected in the Proposed plan amendment and Final EIS.

The Bureau of Land Management initiated final consultation and coordination in compliance with the Taylor Grazing Act on September 6, 2002 with the permittee on Whitewater Canyon Allotment based upon the alternatives released in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement and the public comment received. Changes were made to the Proposed Plan in response to comments received.

This Proposed Coachella Valley CDCA Plan Amendment and Final EIS is available for a 30-day protest period, beginning the date the Environmental Protection Agency publishes notice in the Federal Register (October 18, 2002). Citizens who feel adversely affected by the Proposed Plan may protest those proposed decisions to the Director of the BLM in accordance with the protest procedures outlined in Title 43 Code of Federal Regulations Part 1610.5-2. **Written protests must be filed with the Director on or before November 18, 2002.**

The BLM initiated government-to-government consultation with Indian Tribes by letter in November of 2000. This letter invited Native American participation and comment in the planning process. In March of 2002, as the planning document evolved and potential land management actions became more clearly defined, a second letter was sent to update tribes and to continue government-to-government consultation. Letters were sent to the following Tribes: Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians, Augustine Band of Mission Indians, Cabazon Band of Mission Indians, Cahuilla Band of Indians, Colorado River Indian Tribes, Fort Mojave Indian Tribe, Los Coyotes Band of Indians, Morongo Band of

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Mission Indians, Ramona Band of Mission Indians, Santa Rosa Band of Mission Indians, Torres-Martinez Band of Desert Cahuilla Indians, and Twenty-Nine Palms Band of Mission Indians. Follow-up discussions were conducted with representatives of the Agua Caliente, Augustine, Morongo, and Fort Mojave groups. The Bureau of Land Management also requested a record search of the sacred lands files of the Native American Heritage Commission. Upon publication, a copy of the Draft and Final EIS was mailed directly to each of the Tribes.

BLM has been informally consulting with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the California Department of Fish and Game since 1996 as the Draft CDCA Plan Amendment/ EIS was being developed in coordination with the CVMSHCP Plan. Formal consultation for the Coachella Valley CDCA Plan Amendment was initiated August 8, 2002, and is anticipated to be completed December of 2002.

BLM is also in consultation with the California State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) under the 1998 State Protocol Agreement between the California State Director of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the California State Historic Preservation Office. An early notification and invitation to participate in identification of issues was submitted to the SHPO's office in September of 2001. BLM met with the State Historic Preservation Officer in Sacramento in February, 2002 to facilitate consensus between the agencies on the approach taken to address cultural resources under the plan amendment. During the meeting, BLM briefed the SHPO staff on the planning effort and presented a proposal for completing field inventory in support of the planning effort. This proposal was submitted formally to SHPO on March 25, 2002. Copies of the Draft and Final EIS were also submitted to SHPO upon publication.

BLM conducted an extensive collaborative effort with the local jurisdictions, interest groups, private citizens, researchers and wildlife agencies to gather the best available information about bighorn sheep, used in the analysis for this CDCA Plan Amendment. BLM sponsored a televised forum at Palm Springs City Hall, which included presentations on bighorn sheep biology and the opportunity for the public to ask questions of the biologists present. BLM conducted a focused effort to gather input from sheep biologists. The intent was to define, to the degree possible, which biological concepts were supported by peer reviewed studies, by "gray" literature (e.g. analysis and argumentation in journals), by widely shared, expert opinion, or by an untested hypothesis or opinion. This then could be matched to available facts regarding sheep populations within the planning area. BLM held a joint meeting with the Recovery Team at University of California at Davis September 28-29, 2000 to review the status of the bighorn sheep science as it related to trail use. Sheep biologists beyond those who were on the Recovery Team were also invited to the meeting and several attended. A draft literature review related to sheep and trails was reviewed and edited.

BLM then held individual meetings or discussions with sheep biologists in the peer-reviewed literature that could not attend the meeting but wanted to contribute their ideas concerning bighorn sheep and trails. An additional draft of the "Status of the Science" was made available to all those who contributed during the editing process (via internet) as a check on the accuracy of the literature citations and representations. The final "Status of the Science" document was then placed on BLM's web page for public review and use and continues to be available at www.ca.blm.gov/palmsprings/whcbighorn.html

Acknowledging that there are gaps in the scientific literature describing the impacts of recreation on bighorn sheep, BLM contacted a broad group of biologists and land managers to review the Bighorn Sheep Strategy and the Trails Management Plan. A copy of the *Draft* EIS, with a cover letter requesting a strong review of the science used in the analysis as well as the range of alternatives for both the Peninsular Bighorn Sheep Strategy and the Draft Trails Management Plan, was mailed to forty-four bighorn sheep biologists and land managers in nine western states, including members of the Peninsular Ranges and Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep recovery teams. Of the comments received, five biologists believed that recreation was having a population level effect on local sheep populations, fifteen believed that recreation did not affect sheep in their area, and twenty-four did not respond.

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Table ES-1: Summary of CDCA Plan Amendment Alternatives			
Alternative A	Alternative B	Alternative C	Alternative D: No Action
<u>Wild and Scenic Rivers – Proposed Plan</u> A total of 20.3 miles of river segments on BLM-managed lands were found eligible for inclusion into the National Wild and Scenic River System. These river segments include portions of Whitewater Canyon, Mission Creek channel, and Palm Canyon. BLM-managed river segments in Little and Big Morongo Canyons, and Whitewater Canyon south of Bonnie Bell were assessed and determined to be ineligible for inclusion.			<u>Wild and Scenic Rivers</u> No recommendations would be made at this time.
<u>Visual Resource Management – Proposed Plan</u> Visual Resource Management (VRM) classifications would be assigned as follows: (1) Wilderness as VRM Class 1, (2) ACECs and the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains National Monument as Class 2 (except for wilderness within the monument), (3) BLM-managed lands within CVMSHCP conservation areas, except for wind energy facilities, and sand and gravel mining sites as Class 2, (4) BLM-managed lands associated with existing and future development of wind energy facilities, and sand and gravel mining sites, as Class 4, (5) Remaining BLM-managed lands, other than those in the NECO overlap area as Class 4, and (6) the NECO overlap area would remain unassigned.			<u>Visual Resource Management</u> No VRM classifications would be assigned at this time. Wilderness would be managed consistent with VRM Class 1 objectives.
<u>Land Health Standards – Proposed Plan</u> Adopt regional land health standards, addressing soils, native species, riparian/wetland/ stream function, and water quality. These regional land health standards would apply to all BLM lands and programs, and would be implemented through terms and conditions of permits, leases and other authorizations, actions, resource monitoring, assessments undertaken in accordance with BLM's land use plans.			<u>Land Health Standards</u> Adopt the National Fallback Standards for use as regional land health standards, addressing soils, riparian/wetland, stream function and native species.
<u>Air Quality Management Strategy</u> 1) Install sand fencing to reduce PM10 emissions and maintain habitat for sand dependent species; 2) Authorized uses would be in conformance with the Coachella Valley PM10 State Implementation Plan	<u>Air Quality Management Strategy – Proposed Plan</u> 1) Reduce the number of unpaved routes upwind of sensitive receptors. 2) Manage unauthorized off-road use and provide opportunities for OHV use away from sensitive receptors; 3) Install sand fencing to reduce PM10 emissions and maintain habitat for sand dependent species; 4) Authorized uses would be in conformance with the Coachella Valley PM10 State Implementation Plan		<u>Air Quality Management Strategy</u> Authorized uses would be in conformance with the Coachella Valley PM10 State Implementation Plan

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Table ES-1: Summary of CDCA Plan Amendment Alternatives			
Alternative A	Alternative B	Alternative C	Alternative D: No Action
<u>Multiple Use Classification</u> Classify BLM-managed lands within wilderness areas as Multiple-Use Class “C.” Classify non-wilderness lands within conservation areas as Multiple-Use Class “L”, except for those lands within the Windy Point, Indio Hills, and Iron Door OHV open areas which would be classified as Multiple-Use Class “I.” Classify BLM-managed lands outside conservation areas as Multiple-Use Class “M”, except for those lands within the Drop 31 OHV open area which would be classified as Multiple-Use Class “I.” BLM-managed lands within the sand and gravel mining areas would be classified as Multiple-Use Class “I.”	<u>Multiple Use Classification -- Proposed Plan</u> Classify BLM-managed lands within wilderness areas as Multiple-Use Class “C” (Controlled Use). Classify non-wilderness BLM-managed lands within conservation areas (see Glossary for definition) as Multiple-Use Class “L” (Limited Use). Classify remaining BLM-managed lands as Multiple-Use Class “M” (Moderate Use).	<u>Multiple Use Classification</u> BLM multiple-use classifications would remain unchanged.	
<u>Habitat Conservation Objectives</u> Same as Alternative D.	<u>Habitat Conservation Objectives – Proposed Plan</u> For each of the eight vegetation community types (Figure 2-4), the habitat conservation objectives outlined in Table 2-4 would be used to assess compatible uses and to develop appropriate mitigation measures within conservation areas on BLM-managed lands. Future activities would be required to conform to the habitat conservation objectives established for a particular community type within the conservation areas.	<u>Habitat Conservation Objectives</u> Guidelines provided in the CDCA Plan (1980,as amended) would be used to determine allowable uses within conservation areas.	

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Table ES-1: Summary of CDCA Plan Amendment Alternatives			
Alternative A	Alternative B	Alternative C	Alternative D: No Action
<u>Fire Management</u> Same as Alternative D.	<u>Fire Management – Proposed Plan</u> Fire Management Category A. The following communities are areas where fire would not be desired at all: sand dunes and sand fields. Immediate suppression is a critical element of fire management in these desert environments because fire historically has never played a large role in the development and maintenance of the ecosystem. Fire Management Category B. The following vegetation communities are areas where wildfire is not desired: (1) desert scrub, (2) desert alkali scrub, (3) marsh, (4) dry wash woodland, pinyon-juniper woodland and mesquite, and (5) riparian areas. Immediate suppression is a critical element of fire management in these desert communities because fire historically has never played a large role in the development and maintenance of these communities. Prescribed fire may be utilized as a resource management tool in very select situations, for example to effectively manage exotic vegetation. Fire Management Category C. (1) Oak woodlands and forest communities and (2) chaparral communities are areas where wildland fire (including prescribed burning) may be allowed. The following constraints must be considered in determining the appropriate level of suppression: (1) emphasize protection of life and property, especially trail users and montane communities, (2) evaluate potential beneficial or adverse effects on threatened and endangered species habitat, especially endemic species, (3) evaluate potential for adverse effects to significant or sensitive cultural and other natural resources, (4) promote mosaic pattern of vegetation resulting from different fire histories within the larger landscape, (5) protect areas so that they do not burn at less than 15 year intervals.	<u>Fire Management</u> No habitats would be categorized at this time. Manage fire in accordance with CDCA Plan (1980, as amended) and the District-wide Fire Management Plan.	

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Table ES-1: Summary of CDCA Plan Amendment Alternatives			
Alternative A	Alternative B	Alternative C	Alternative D: No Action
<p><u>Special Area Designations – Proposed Plan</u> Designate the Coachella Valley Wildlife Habitat Management Area (WHMA) to include BLM-managed lands within the CVMSHCP conservation areas which are outside existing ACECs, Wilderness Areas, National Monuments, proposed NECO Chuckwalla WHMA, and freeway interchanges in the NECO overlap area (Figure 2-6a). Existing ACEC boundaries would remain unchanged.</p>	<p><u>Special Area Designations</u> Expand Dos Palmas ACEC to include BLM-managed lands within the Dos Palmas CVMSHCP conservation area. Designate the Upper Mission Creek ACEC to include BLM-managed lands within the Upper Mission Creek conservation sub-area. Designate remaining BLM-managed lands within the CVMSHCP conservation areas and outside ACECs, proposed NECO Chuckwalla WHMA, and existing Wilderness Areas and National Monuments as the Coachella Valley.</p>	<p><u>Special Area Designations</u> Designate BLM-managed lands within the CVMSHCP conservation areas which are outside existing ACECs, Wilderness Areas, National Monuments, proposed NECO Chuckwalla WHMA, and freeway interchanges in the NECO overlap area as the Coachella Valley ACEC.</p>	<p><u>Special Area Designations</u> No BLM-managed lands would be given additional designations beyond those currently listed in the CDCA Plan as amended and those established by law. Existing ACEC boundaries shall remain unchanged.</p>
<p><u>Land Tenure: Exchange & Sale Criteria</u> Same as Alternative D.</p>	<p><u>Land Tenure: Exchange & Sale Criteria – Proposed Plan</u> BLM lands in the Coachella Valley would generally be retained in public ownership. The following criteria would be applied in evaluating the suitability of land exchanges and sales. Land exchanges and sales may be considered if they would: 1) Facilitate effective and efficient management of conservation areas; 2) Be conducted in coordination with the local jurisdictions; 3) Would result in a net benefit to the conservation areas or divert intensive uses away from sensitive areas; 4) Not remove rare species nor their habitat, nor remove rare habitat types from conservation management; 5) Not remove eligible historic properties from conservation management; and 6) Not divest of public domain lands which eliminates a significant public benefit.</p>		<p><u>Land Tenure: Exchange & Sale Criteria</u> Public land disposal will be considered on a case-by-case basis in accordance with the CDCA Plan (1980 as amended). Class C, L and I lands may be exchanged, but not sold.</p>
<p><u>Land Tenure: Acquisition Criteria</u> Same as Alternative D.</p>	<p><u>Land Tenure: Acquisition Criteria – Proposed Plan</u> Acquisition proposals which meet the following criteria may be considered: 1) Be acquired from willing sellers only; 2) Be coordinated with the local jurisdictions; 3) Benefit the Coachella Valley conservation areas by augmenting public ownership in a sensitive area or diverting intensive uses away from sensitive areas; or 4) Improve the presence of a variety of biotic or abiotic habitat components under conservation management.</p>		<p><u>Land Tenure: Acquisition Criteria</u> Acquisitions would be considered on a case-by-case basis in accordance with the CDCA Plan 1980 as amended.</p>

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Table ES-1: Summary of CDCA Plan Amendment Alternatives			
Alternative A	Alternative B	Alternative C	Alternative D: No Action
<u>Management of Acquired and Formerly Withdrawn Lands – Proposed Plan</u> Lands acquired by purchase, donation or lands removed from withdrawal status shall be managed in accordance with the CDCA Plan, as amended and the applicable land and mineral laws upon issuance of an opening order published in the <i>Federal Register</i> . Lands located within the boundaries of ACECs or any other area having an administrative designation established through the land use planning process shall become part of the area within which they are located and managed accordingly upon issuance of the opening order. Off-highway vehicle area and route designations would be applied to acquired lands based on a suite of proposed criteria to ensure consistency with surrounding land uses.			<u>Management of Acquired and Formerly Withdrawn Lands</u> Acquired and formerly withdrawn lands are subject to applicable land and minerals laws when an opening order is issued and published in the <i>Federal Register</i>
<u>Communication Sites & Utilities</u> Rights-of-way for new and renewals of windparks, communications sites, and utilities would be considered within conservation areas, if habitat conservation objectives could be met using appropriate mitigation measures.	<u>Communication Sites & Utilities – Proposed Plan</u> Windpark development would be permitted in designated areas and new towers within existing communication sites on a space available basis and consistent with habitat conservation objectives using appropriate mitigation measures. Proposed utilities within designated utility corridors and within conservation areas may be considered, consistent with the habitat conservation objectives.	<u>Communication Sites & Utilities</u> No new communication sites nor windparks within CVMSHCP conservation areas. Renewals would be considered on a case-by-case basis consistent with habitat conservation objectives. Retire inactive windpark sites. Proposed utilities within designated utility corridors and within conservation areas may be considered, consistent with the habitat conservation objectives.	<u>Communication Sites & Utilities</u> Rights-of-way for new windparks, renewals of existing windparks, communications sites, and utilities will be considered on a space available basis in conformance with CDCA Plan, as amended.
<u>Sand and Gravel Mining</u> Saleable mineral material extraction would be allowed within CVMSHCP conservation areas and outside of Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, if habitat conservation objectives could be met.	<u>Sand and Gravel Mining – Proposed Plan</u> Within conservation areas, mining would be restricted to State designated mineral resource zones, and may be allowed if habitat conservation objectives can be met. Outside the conservation areas, mining may be considered consistent with federal laws and regulations.	<u>Sand and Gravel Mining</u> BLM lands within the CVMSHCP conservation areas would be closed to saleable mineral material extraction.	<u>Sand and Gravel Mining</u> Saleable mining actions would be considered on a case-by-case basis in accordance with the CDCA Plan (1980 as amended).

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Table ES-1: Summary of CDCA Plan Amendment Alternatives			
Alternative A	Alternative B	Alternative C	Alternative D: No Action
<p><u>Livestock Grazing – Proposed Plan</u> Whitewater Canyon Allotment (Figure 2-8) management emphasis will be on the compatibility with (1) with conservation objectives of the desert tortoise, arroyo toad, and riparian habitat values, and (2) use of, and access to, intermingled private lands. Grazing would continue as a permitted use until the lessee voluntarily relinquishes the permitted use and preference, at which time the allotment would become unavailable for grazing. Upon BLM's relinquishment acceptance, the BLM will, without further analysis or notice, not reissue the lease; remove the allotment designation; and assume any and all private interest in range improvements located on public lands.</p>	<p><u>Livestock Grazing</u> Retire that portion of the Whitewater Canyon grazing allotment north of the San Bernardino/Riverside County Line. Adjust season of use and grazing capacity accordingly.</p>	<p><u>Livestock Grazing</u> Retire the entire Whitewater Canyon grazing allotment.</p>	<p><u>Livestock Grazing</u> Current management of the Whitewater Canyon grazing allotment as provided in the CDCA Plan, as amended.</p>
<p><u>Wild Horse and Burro Program</u> Retain Palm Canyon and Morongo Herd Management Area (HMA) designations. Maintain levels set in accordance with current CDCA Plan, as amended. Establish Palm Canyon HMA as a grazing allotment for branded horses.</p>	<p><u>Wild Horse and Burro Program – Proposed Plan</u> Retire Palm Canyon & Morongo HMAs. BLM parcels within and adjacent to the Palm Canyon HMA (T5S R4E and T4S R4E) would be transferred to the Agua Caliente Tribe via land exchange, in accordance with the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains National Monument Act of 2000</p>	<p><u>Wild Horse and Burro Program</u> Retire Palm Canyon and Morongo HMAs. Remove existing animals from BLM-managed lands.</p>	<p><u>Wild Horse and Burro Program</u> Retain Palm Canyon and Morongo and Herd Management Areas (HMA) designations. Levels set at six and 16 animals, respectively in accordance with current CDCA Plan, as amended.</p>

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<p><u>Motorized-Vehicle Area Designations</u> Designate Indio Hills, Drop 31, Windy Point, and Iron Door as areas “open” to motorized vehicles. Establish four OHV open areas at Windy Point, Indio Hills, Iron Door and Drop 31. Indian Avenue Preserve and Willow Hole-Edom Hill would be designated “closed.” Big Morongo Canyon and Dos Palmas ACECs would remain “closed.” All other BLM-managed public lands within the CVMSHCP conservation areas would remain “limited.” Wilderness areas are closed to casual motorized-vehicle use by statute.</p>	<p><u>Motorized-Vehicle Area Designations – Proposed Plan</u> Establish an off-highway vehicle managed use area in the vicinity of Drop 31. Windy Point south of Highway 111 would be designated “closed” to off-highway vehicles. Conservation areas and the remaining BLM-managed lands, except wilderness would be designated or remain “limited.” Wilderness areas are closed to casual motorized-vehicle use by statute. BLM would initiate a public information effort to assist OHV users in identifying and locating the appropriate areas for various types of OHV recreation. Work with Riverside County and the OHV Recreation Division of the California Department of Parks and Recreation to establish an OHV recreation area in the southeastern portion of the Coachella Valley. If the OHV play area lands were to be acquired by BLM, the intent would be to designate the area as “open”.</p>	<p><u>Motorized-Vehicle Area Designations</u> Windy Point south of Highway 111 would be designated “closed.” Indian Avenue Preserve and Willow Hole-Edom Hill would be designated “closed.” Big Morongo Canyon and Dos Palmas ACECs would remain “closed.” All other BLM-managed public lands within the CVMSHCP conservation areas would remain as “limited.” Wilderness areas are closed to casual motorized-vehicle use by statute.</p>	<p><u>Motorized-Vehicle Area Designations</u> No new area closures nor off-highway vehicle open areas would be established at this time. Wilderness areas are closed to casual motorized-vehicle use by statute.</p>
<p><u>Motorized-Vehicle Access: Route Designations</u> 73 miles of routes currently available for casual use would be designated as open. 70 miles of existing route closures, established through previous planning efforts or rights-of-ways shall remain in effect. Manage Dunn road for administrative purposes.</p>	<p><u>Motorized-Vehicle Access: Route Designations – Proposed Plan</u> 47 miles of routes would be designated open. 26 miles of routes would be designated closed. 70 miles of existing route closures, established through previous planning efforts or rights-of-ways shall remain in effect. Dunn road would be closed to casual use until bighorn sheep recover.</p>	<p><u>Motorized-Vehicle Access: Route Designations</u> 27 miles of routes would be designated open. 46 miles of routes would be designated closed. 70 miles of existing route closures, established through previous planning efforts or rights-of-ways shall remain in effect. Dunn road would be closed to casual use.</p>	<p><u>Motorized-Vehicle Access: Route Designations</u> Motorized-vehicle access would continue on 73 miles of currently available routes.</p>

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<u>Special Recreation Mgt Area</u> Establish the Meccacopia SRMA which includes the Mecca Hills and Orocopia Mountains Wildernesses, Drop 31 “open” area, and Red Cloud Mine Road. Develop a management strategy through preparation of a management plan which protects wilderness values, and enhances quality of motorized and non-motorized vehicle recreation.	<u>Special Recreation Mgt. Area – Proposed Plan</u> This alternative is similar to Alternative A, however Drop 31 would not be designated as an “open” area. In addition, and as part of the overall management strategy, establish wildlife watering zones by constructing and maintaining additional water sources with limited vehicle access to discourage bighorn sheep from using the Coachella Canal and to minimize conflicts with off-highway vehicle users. Development of water sources inside wilderness areas would be consistent with limits and guidelines established in the NECO Plan.	<u>Special Recreation Mgt. Area</u> Establish the Meccacopia SRMA which includes the Mecca Hills and Orocopia Mountains Wildernesses, and Red Cloud Mine Road. Develop a management strategy through preparation of a management plan which protects wilderness values, and enhances quality of motorized and non-motorized vehicle recreation. Close areas where vehicle use is significantly limiting or preventing wildlife access to water.	<u>Special Recreation Mgt. Area</u> No SRMA would be designated at this time. Management would continue based on existing uses and designations.
<u>Recreation: Stopping, Parking, and Vehicle Camping – Proposed Plan</u> Stopping, parking, and vehicle camping would be allowed within 100 feet from the centerline of an approved route except where fenced. This exception applies to all alternatives: <i>Where wilderness boundaries are coincident with approved routes, stopping, parking, and vehicle camping must remain outside of wilderness boundary.</i>		<u>Recreation: Stopping, Parking, and Vehicle Camping:</u> would be allowed within 300 feet from the centerline of an approved route except within ACECs and conservation areas where the limit would be 30 feet for stopping and parking. No camping within CVMSHCP conservation areas..	<u>Recreation: Stopping, Parking, and Vehicle Camping</u> Stopping, parking, and vehicle camping would be allowed within 300 feet of a route of travel except within ACECs where the limit would be 100 feet.

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Peninsular Ranges Bighorn Sheep Recovery Strategy – Proposed Plan for All Alternatives

- Acquire, or exchange to acquire, bighorn sheep habitat from willing landowners
- Implement a fire management plan in fire adapted habitats to help maintain bighorn sheep habitat
- Management of invasive weeds such as tamarisk, arundo, and fountain grass will continue to be a priority habitat management effort
- Manage aircraft activities to reduce or eliminate habitat fragmentation or interference with bighorn sheep resource use patterns
- Manage road use on BLM-managed lands, consistent with the CDCA Plan (1980) as amended, to minimize habitat fragmentation or interference with bighorn sheep resource use patterns
- Develop and implement education and public awareness programs
- Publish an annual report describing management, monitoring results, and management implications of research conducted on BLM-managed public lands.
- Coordinate all management and monitoring efforts with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, California Department of Fish and Game, Coachella Valley Association of Governments, and local jurisdictions to ensure a landscape level approach to recovery of bighorn sheep populations.
- Make public lands available for species management by California Department of Fish and Game for activities, such as predator management, reintroduction and augmentation, conducted in coordination with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and local jurisdictions, and in accordance with the Master Memorandum of Understanding between the California Department of Fish and Game and the Bureau of Land Management (October 1993).

Bighorn Sheep Recovery Strategy (cont.)

- Maintain existing water sources and provide additional water sources on public lands using primarily habitat restoration methods. Artificial water installation may be used where habitat restoration efforts are ineffective
- Manage land uses to avoid, reduce, or mitigate disturbance
- Work with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and California Department of Fish and Game, local jurisdictions, and user groups to reduce impacts from all human activities on bighorn sheep by relying primarily on voluntary avoidance programs. Few constraints would be placed on the subject or

Bighorn Sheep Recovery Strategy (cont.) – Proposed Plan

- Maintain existing water sources through tamarisk eradication and provide additional artificial water sources on public lands. Locations for artificial water sources would be carefully selected to reduce interactions between bighorn and the urban interface
- Reduce impacts to bighorn sheep (especially during the water stress and lambing season) using a combination of methods, including voluntary avoidance programs, closures, seasonal restrictions, and permit stipulations and mitigations. Projects emphasizing the least disturbing techniques available and practicable would be

Bighorn Sheep Recovery Strategy (cont.)

- Concentrate efforts to provide additional water sources on public lands through installation of artificial waters. Installation of watering devices would be restricted to the fall
- Human activities within bighorn sheep habitat on BLM lands would be largely curtailed through implementation of trail closures, especially in lambing and watering areas. Administrative activities and permitted activities (such as patrolling and research) would be restricted to the

Bighorn Sheep Recovery Strategy (cont.)

- Continuation of current management in accordance with the CDCA Plan (1980, as amended).
- Continue efforts to control tamarisk. Artificial waters may be considered on a case-by-case basis
 - Fence construction may be considered on a case-by-case basis.
 - Research and monitoring proposals may be considered on a case-by-case basis.
 - Public lands may be considered for reintroduction, augmentation, or predator control after analysis and public comment.

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<p>methods for research on public lands</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ► Construct fences across public lands to exclude bighorn sheep from urban areas where they have begun or may begin using urban sources of food and water 	<p>encouraged. Some level of disturbance to bighorn sheep may be permitted during water stress and lambing season to obtain information, resulting in more effective management of bighorn sheep and their habitat</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construct fences across public lands to exclude bighorn sheep from urban areas where there is a demonstrated problem. Projects would be coordinated with local jurisdictions, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the California Department of Fish and Game to ensure that water is available before sheep are excluded from urban areas known to provide water 	<p>minimum necessary to protect bighorn sheep</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow fence construction across public lands only where necessary to complete a fence crossing other jurisdictions and where there is a demonstrated problem that a fence would effectively address 	
<p><u>Hiking, Biking & Equestrian Trails – Proposed Plan</u></p> <p>Manage trail segments across public lands in coordination with members of the public, local jurisdictions, State and other Federal agencies to provide for a year-round suite of non-motorized recreation opportunities on interconnected trails in the Coachella Valley and surrounding mountains. Non-motorized uses of the public lands within the Coachella Valley planning area may be limited, including area and trail closures, as needed to protect sensitive resources. New trails which avoid impacts to sensitive resources and are developed in coordination with the community may be allowed.</p>			<p><u>Hiking, Biking & Equestrian Trails</u></p> <p>Non-motorized uses of the public lands and development of new trails would be allowed, in accordance with Federal law and regulation.</p>

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Environmental Element	Table ES-2: Effects of Coachella Valley CDCA Plan Amendment Alternatives NOTE: Where specific plan element actions are not discussed, no beneficial nor adverse impacts are anticipated.			
	Alternative A	Alternative B	Alternative C	Alternative D
ACECs	No new ACECs would be designated.	7,292 acres would be designated as new ACECs	23,631 acres would be designated as new ACECs	No new ACECs would be designated.
Wild & Scenic Rivers	<p>Management of all activities in accordance with regional land health standards and continued suspension of grazing within the Whitewater allotment would help maintain and could enhance the outstandingly remarkable values of BLM-managed river segments located within Whitewater Canyon and Mission Creek. These segments totaling 19.1 miles in length are eligible for wild and scenic river designation. Such management would also help maintain and could enhance outstandingly remarkable values of a BLM-managed river segment in Palm Canyon. This segment totaling 1.2 miles in length is eligible for wild and scenic river designation.</p>	<p>Management of all activities in accordance with regional land health standards and habitat conservation objectives for riparian communities would allow for continued recovery of riparian areas, thereby maintaining and potentially enhancing the outstandingly remarkable values of BLM-managed river segments located within Whitewater Canyon and Mission Creek. Elimination of the Whitewater grazing allotment north of the county line, affecting 5.8 miles of BLM-managed river segments in Whitewater Canyon and Mission Creek, would additionally promote continued recovery of riparian areas at this location, thereby maintaining and potentially enhancing outstandingly remarkable values of the river segments. The Palm Canyon land exchange with the Agua Caliente Tribe would transfer responsibility for coordinating a wild and scenic river suitability study of Palm Canyon to the USFS, pursuant to its land use plan decisions.</p>	<p>Management of all activities in accordance with regional land health standards and habitat conservation objectives for riparian communities, and elimination of the Whitewater grazing allotment in its entirety would allow for continued recovery of riparian areas, thereby maintaining and potentially enhancing the outstandingly remarkable values of BLM-managed river segments located within Whitewater Canyon and Mission Creek. These segments totaling 19.1 miles in length are eligible for designation as wild and scenic rivers. Such management would also help maintain and could enhance outstandingly remarkable values of a BLM-managed river segment in Palm Canyon. This segment totaling 1.2 miles in length is also eligible for wild and scenic river designation.</p>	<p>Management of all activities in accordance with National Fallback Standards adopted as regional land health standards would help maintain and could enhance the resource conditions of BLM-managed river segments located in Whitewater Canyon, Mission Creek, and Palm Canyon, totaling 20.3 miles in length. Eligibility determinations regarding possible designation of these segments as wild and scenic rivers would not be made at this time.</p>

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Wilderness	Management of all activities in accordance with regional land health standards would help maintain wilderness character on 160,551 acres of BLM-managed wilderness, or possibly enhance such character where improvements to resource conditions occur.	Management of all activities in accordance with regional land health standards and habitat conservation objectives , would help maintain wilderness character on 160,551 acres of BLM-managed wilderness or possibly enhance such character where improvements to resource conditions occur.	Management of all activities in accordance with regional land health standards and habitat conservation objectives , would help maintain wilderness character on 160,551 acres of BLM-managed wilderness or possibly enhance such character where improvements to resource conditions occur.	Management of all activities in accordance with National Fallback Standards adopted as regional land health standards would help maintain wilderness character on 160,551 acres of BLM-managed wilderness where improvements to resource conditions are accrued.
Livestock Grazing and Farmlands	38,936 acres of a federal grazing allotment (990 animal unit months per year) would continue until the lessee voluntarily relinquishes the permitted use and preference, at which time the allotment would become unavailable for grazing. Upon BLM's relinquishment acceptance, the BLM will, without further analysis or notice, not reissue the lease; remove the allotment designation. Impacts would be the same as under Alternative C. No impact to farmlands as no BLM lands are under lease for agricultural production.	Approximately 9,700 acres of federal grazing allotment would be retired, thus eliminating 248 animal unit months per year. The grazing regime may be adjusted to meet regional land health standards and habitat conservation objectives . No impact to farmlands as no BLM lands are under lease for agricultural production.	38,936 acres of federal grazing allotment would be retired, thus eliminating 990 animal unit months (119 head of cattle) per year. No impact to farmlands as no BLM lands are under lease for agricultural production.	No impact to grazing nor farmlands. Grazing on 38,936 acres of BLM-managed lands would continue to be available for grazing, providing 990 animal unit months.
Wild Horse and Burro Herd Management Areas	Existing HMA's would remain vacant.	All HMAs would be eliminated from the Coachella Valley. No existing wild horses or burros would be affected.	All HMAs would be eliminated from the Coachella Valley. No existing wild horses or burros would be affected.	Existing HMA's would remain vacant.
Transportation	No impact. BLM may grant rights-of-ways for needed road access across public lands.	Same as Alternative A.	Same as Alternative A.	Same as Alternative A.

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Soil, Geology, Mineral, Energy Resources	<p>Valid existing rights would be unaffected. BLM-managed public lands outside existing ACECs, Monuments and wilderness would continue to be available for sand and gravel mining. New mining and wind energy facilities within CVMSHCP conservation areas would be subject to conformance with the habitat conservation objectives. An additional 200-300 acres of wind energy development would occur north of Highway 111, most likely in areas historically used for wind energy generation. Additional mitigation measures may be required to meet those objectives, resulting in potentially increased project costs.</p>	<p>Valid existing rights would be unaffected. Up to 3,783 acres of State designated sand and gravel resource areas would be available for mining which is anticipated to meet the needs of the developing community for at least the next 20 years, and probably longer. The best available mining sites are in production (556 acres) and are included in the resource areas. An additional 200-300 acres of wind energy development would occur north of Highway 111, most likely in areas historically used for wind energy generation. New mining areas, wind energy facilities, and utility lines within conservation areas (up to 2,232 acres affected) would be subject to conformance with the habitat conservation objectives. Additional mitigation measures may be required to meet those objectives, resulting in potentially increased costs. If the habitat conservation objectives in an area could not be met, mining would foregone.</p>	<p>Valid existing rights would be unaffected. 1,551 acres of State designated sand and gravel resource areas would be available for mining. 2,232 acres of State designated sand and gravel resource areas would be unavailable for mining. New and renewals of windparks would be restricted, and would not likely meet future demand for wind power generation. New utility lines would be subject to conformance with the habitat conservation objectives. Additional mitigation measures may be required to meet those objectives, resulting in potentially increased project costs.</p>	<p>Valid existing rights would be unaffected. New utility projects would be required to be in compliance with the standard suite of environmental laws, including the Endangered Species Act. Mining on currently permitted mining operations on 556 acres of BLM-lands would continue. .</p>
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<p>Recreation</p>	<p>Designation of Indio Hills, Drop 31, Windy Point, and Iron Door as “open areas” for motorized-vehicle access would enhance opportunities for vehicular free-play activities on 3,800 acres of public land throughout the Coachella Valley. Designation of Windy Point south of Highway 111 as an open area, however, would be inconsistent with the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains National Monument Act of 2000. 73 miles of routes would remain available for recreational access. Restricting use of hiking, biking, and equestrian trails would diminish opportunities for non-motorized recreation activities to the degree that limitations are imposed through the activity level planning process.</p>	<p>Motorized vehicle access opportunities would continue at Drop 31. Closure of Windy Point south of Highway 111 would diminish opportunities for OHV activities in an area where OHV use has become informally established, thereby displacing 100-150 people on busy weekends. This closure would largely eliminate dune-based OHV opportunities on public lands in the Coachella Valley. Limiting vehicle use to designated routes at Indio Hills and Iron Door would displace up to about 150 OHV users where OHV free-play areas have been informally established. Closure of 26 miles of routes currently available for use to meet habitat conservation objectives and air quality standards would diminish opportunities for vehicle touring by about 19 percent. Restricting use of hiking, biking, and equestrian trails would diminish opportunities for non-motorized recreation activities to the degree that limitations are imposed through the activity level planning process.</p>	<p>Closure of Windy Point south of Highway 111, and limiting motorized-vehicle access to designated routes at Indio Hills, Iron Door, and Drop 31 would diminish opportunities for OHV free-play activities that have historically been available and frequently enjoyed at these sites, thereby displacing up to 500 OHV users per week during the cooler months. Prohibiting vehicle camping on public lands within conservation areas would diminish opportunities in those areas, primarily on the developed valley floor. Closure of 46 miles of routes currently available for use to meet habitat conservation objectives and further improve air quality relative to Alternative B would diminish opportunities for vehicle touring by about 34%. Restricting use of hiking, biking, and equestrian trails would diminish opportunities for non-motorized recreation activities to the degree that limitations are imposed through the activity level planning process.</p>	<p>Restricting motorized-vehicle access to designated routes of travel in the Windy Point area south of Highway 11, as required by the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains National Monument Act of 2000, would eliminate vehicular free-play activities on the sand dunes and adjacent lands that have historically occurred.</p>
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<p>Motorized-Vehicle Access</p>	<p>Motorized-vehicle access would not change since routes outside existing closed areas would be designated "open." Seventy-one miles of routes (52% of the total mileage on BLM lands) would remain available for use. Vehicle access to the Dunn Road area would continue to be controlled by locked gates. Permitted commercial jeep tours could occur during the fall months with access through Pinyon Flats, subject to private landowner permission where applicable, and terms and conditions of a biological opinion. At least 7,000 visitors annually would continue to be displaced by these limitations in conjunction with denial of permission to cross private lands on the lower portion of the road. Permitted use of Dunn Road would result in little impact for flood control, law enforcement, search and rescue, fire control, and research activities. Legal access to landowners and agencies provided through a right-of-way grant would likely continue at low use levels.</p>	<p>Motorized-vehicle access would be reduced by about 19% on public lands with the closure of 26 miles of routes currently available for use. Vehicle access to the Dunn Road area would continue to be controlled by locked gates. Permitted commercial jeep tours could occur during the fall months with access through Pinyon Flats, subject to private landowner permission where applicable, and terms and conditions of a biological opinion. At least 7,000 visitors annually would continue to be displaced by these limitations in conjunction with denial of permission to cross private lands on the lower portion of the road. Permitted use of Dunn Road would result in little impact for flood control, law enforcement, search and rescue, and fire control activities. Legal access to landowners and agencies provided through a right-of-way grant would likely continue at low use levels. Re-evaluation of route designation in the Dunn Road area upon bighorn sheep recovery may allow for increased public recreation by vehicle.</p>	<p>Motorized-vehicle would be reduced by about 34% on public lands with the closure of 46 miles of routes currently available for use. Where use of a route closed to casual use is deemed necessary in conjunction with an authorized activity (e.g., activities approved through a right-of-way grant) or to gain access to private lands, motorized access may be allowed. Vehicle access to the Dunn Road area would continue to be controlled by locked gates. Permitted commercial jeep tours would not be permitted. At least 10,000 visitors annually would be displaced, though denial of permission to cross private lands on the lower portion of the road currently displaces most of this use. Over time, portions of Dunn Road would become impassible due to erosion. Continued access for flood control, law enforcement, and fire control would be limited by road condition, except in the case of an ongoing fire or emergency (in which case the road surface may be reestablished). Legal access to landowners and agencies provided through a right-of-way grant would be continued, but a through road is unlikely to persist.</p>	<p>Motorized-vehicle access would not change since use of existing routes outside closed areas would be continued, except where routes are temporarily closed through supplemental rules. Where use of a route closed to casual use is deemed necessary in conjunction with an authorized activity (e.g., activities approved through a right-of-way grant) or to gain access to private lands, motorized access may be allowed. Uses of Dunn Road would be the same as under Alternative A, except that no limitations as to when commercial jeep tours may occur would be imposed. Instead, applications for permits would be addressed on a case-by-case basis, subject to permission of private landowners where applicable, and terms and conditions of a biological opinion.</p>
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Floodplains and Hydrology	No impacts. BLM must consult with the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers prior to authorizing on public lands any activities which may affect waters of the U.S. and related floodplains.	Same as Alternative A	Same as Alternative A	Same as Alternative A
Water Quality	No impact. The land health standards incorporate best management practices for protecting water quality for activities on BLM land.	Same as Alternative A	Same as Alternative A	No impact. BLM activities which may affect water quality are subject to State Water Quality Control Board permitting procedures and/or pollution control measures.
Biological	<p>Habitat Conservation Objectives, Land Health Standards, Fire Management Categories, Exchange, Sale and Acquisition Criteria, and Management of Acquired Lands: Management of biological resources would be consistent with Federal law and regulation, absent a landscape approach to multi-species habitat conservation.</p> <p>Relinquishment of grazing within the Whitewater allotment would improve biological resources where improvements to resource conditions are accrued. Motorized vehicles can negatively impact biological resources by increasing visitor traffic to sensitive biological areas. Motorized vehicles can increase erosion thereby impacting soil microorganisms.</p>	<p>Established Habitat Conservation Objectives benefit biological species by providing criteria upon which to base future actions on BLM land, thereby providing for landscape level conservation of sensitive biological species.</p> <p>Implementation of Land Health Standards, Fire Management Categories, Exchange, Sale and Acquisition Criteria and Management of Acquired Lands, would provide a landscape approach to multi-species habitat conservation.</p> <p>Management of all activities in accordance with regional land health standards and habitat conservation objectives, and elimination of the Whitewater grazing allotment north of the county line would improve</p>	<p>Habitat Conservation Objectives, Land Health Standards, Fire Management Categories, Exchange, Sale and Acquisition Criteria, and Management of Acquired Lands: Impacts would be the same as Alternative B.</p> <p>Management of all activities in accordance with regional land health standards and habitat conservation objectives, and elimination of the Whitewater grazing allotment in its entirety would would improve biological resources where improvements to resource conditions are accrued.</p> <p>Motorized Vehicles: Closure of roads can decrease visitation and therefore decrease potential negative effects to biological resources.</p>	<p>Habitat Conservation Objectives, Land Health Standards, Fire Management Categories, Exchange, Sale and Acquisition Criteria, and Management of Acquired Lands: Impacts would be the same as Alternative A.</p> <p>Management of all activities in accordance with National Fallback Standards adopted as regional land health standards would improve biological resources where improvements to resource conditions are accrued.</p> <p>Motorized Vehicles: Same as Alternative A.</p> <p>Motorized Vehicle Area Designations: Same as Alternative A.</p>

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	<p>Motorized Vehicle Area Designations of “Open” negatively impact sensitive biological resources by not limiting vehicle access to managed routes, thereby increasing sand compaction and erosion and potentially decreasing plant populations.</p> <p>Bighorn Sheep Recovery Strategy benefits bighorn sheep and other species by controlling tamarisk, managing water sources, constructing fences, reviewing research, limiting helicopter overflights, thereby limiting disturbance to sheep, etc.</p>	<p>biological resources where improvements to resource conditions are accrued.</p> <p>Motorized Vehicles: Same as Alternative A and C.</p> <p>Motorized Vehicle Area Designations: Same as Alternative A and C.</p> <p>Bighorn Sheep Recovery Strategy: Similar to Alternative A with additional measures to further reduce impacts. Use of Hiking, Biking, and Equestrian Trails may be limited, including area closures, providing a benefit to sensitive biological resources</p>	<p>Motorized Vehicle Area Designations: Not designating areas as “Open” can decrease visitation and therefore decrease potential negative effects to biological resources.</p> <p>Bighorn Sheep Recovery Strategy: Similar to Alternative B with additional measures to further reduce impacts.</p> <p>Hiking, Biking, and Equestrian Trails: Same as Alternative B.</p>	<p>Bighorn Sheep Recovery Strategy benefits bighorn sheep by removing tamarisk and considered recovery strategies such as constructing fences reviewing research and monitoring proposals on a case-by-case basis.</p> <p>Hiking, Biking, and Equestrian Trails Negative impact to sensitive biological resources may result without ability to limit use.</p>
Cultural/Native American Concerns	<p>Wild and Scenic Rivers: Designation of the rivers by Congress would provide additional protection to cultural resources from surface-disturbing activities. However, increased visitation could result in potential adverse effects such as trampling of archaeological sites by visitors and collection of artifacts and native plant materials. Access to these rivers for Native American cultural purposes would not change with designation. Multiple Use Classification: Same as Alternative D. Habitat Conservation Objectives, & Special Area Designations:</p>	<p>Wild and Scenic Rivers: Same as Alternative A. Multiple Use Class: Cultural resources would be protected from the effects of concentrated land use. Adoption of habitat conservation objectives would provide additional protection to cultural resources as they call for at least 99% conservation of specific habitat types. These objectives limit surface disturbance and impacts to cultural resources. Fostering native plants presents a potential positive impact by supplying materials for traditional Native American practices. Special Area Designation: The expansion of the Dos Palmas ACEC, in conjunction with</p>	<p>Wild and Scenic Rivers: Same as Alternative A. Multiple Use Class, Habitat Conservation Objectives and Special Area Designations: Same as Alternative B. Sand and Gravel Mining: Same as Alternative A. Adoption of Alternative C would provide for protection of Native American values and historic properties from the effects of livestock grazing. Alternative C would prevent further negative impacts to cultural resources that occur as a result of the presence of horses and burros in sensitive areas.</p>	<p>Deferring eligibility determinations for Wild and Scenic Rivers would not directly affect cultural resources. These resources are protected from the effects of specific actions under the National Historic Preservation Act and other applicable regulations and guidelines. Multiple Use Class: inventories would be conducted as proposals are submitted for consideration. Habitat Conservation: Protection of cultural resources would be addressed on a case-by-case basis in accordance with the National Historic</p>

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	<p>Special Area Designations: Same as Alternative D. Sand and Gravel Mining: Alternative A would decrease the potential for effects to cultural by imposing restrictions on the location of future sand and gravel operations. Livestock Grazing: Grazing impacts would continue until the lease is relinquished, at which time the allotment would become unavailable for grazing. Wild Horse and Burro Program: Same as Alternative D.</p> <p>Motorized vehicle access may generate appreciation of cultural resources due to visitation. However access can also increase risk of vandalism. Motorized vehicles can increase erosion where roads pass near or through archaeological sites. Roads also may provide Native American access to ceremonial sites and traditional plant collecting areas. Cultural resources inventories would be required to minimize or eliminate the potential for effects. The location of sensitive resources in the area of the Dunn Road supports continued closure or limited use of this route. Alternative A. affords no additional protection to cultural resources.</p>	<p>ACEC, in conjunction with management practices designed to protect its significant archaeological and Native American values, would have a positive impact on cultural resources. Sand and Gravel Mining: Same as Alternative A. Alternative B would provide for protection of Native American values and historic properties from the effects of livestock grazing on the northern part of the allotment. Wild Horse and Burro Program: Horses and burros have the same effects to cultural resources as other livestock.</p> <p>Motorized vehicles: Alternative B would provide increased protection to cultural resources by closing sensitive areas and shifting use to areas with little potential to contain significant resources. Several routes with archaeological sites within 300 feet of centerline are closed under this proposal. An additional 17 cultural sites would be protected; six of these sites contain elements that may qualify them for NRHP listing. Access to identified Native American gathering or ceremonial areas would not be affected by proposed closures.</p>	<p>Motorized vehicles: Same as Alternative B except that the lack of alternative OHV areas may shift activity to unauthorized and potentially sensitive areas. Motorized vehicle area and route designations: Same as Alternative B except that Alternative C would protect an additional 7 known archaeological sites. Three of these sites may be significant.</p>	<p>with the National Historic Preservation Act and other applicable regulations and policies. Special Area Designations: No effects to cultural resources. Sand and Gravel Mining: Protection of cultural resources would be addressed on a case-by-case basis in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act and other applicable regulations and policies. Livestock grazing can have a negative impact on cultural resources by encouraging erosion, causing trampling and displacement of artifacts, and introducing non-native plant species. Wild Horse and Burro. Horses and burros have the same effects to cultural resources as other livestock.</p> <p>Motorized Vehicles: The No Action alternative poses a threat to cultural resources as unregulated OHV riding intrudes into areas where the potential for cultural resources is not known.</p>
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Air Quality	The land health standards incorporate best management practices for protecting air quality for activities on BLM land. The Windy Point, Indio Hills and Iron Door open areas and open routes would contribute to the non-attainment of PM-10 standards documented at the Indio air quality monitoring station. To the extent public land activities contribute to PM-10 levels, other non-federal land uses may be constrained in order to meet air quality standards for the benefit of valley residents.	The land health standards incorporate best management practices for protecting air quality which apply to activities on BLM land. Limiting motorized vehicle access to designated routes in most areas, would reduce PM-10 emissions originating from the public lands. To the extent management of public land activities contributes to reducing PM-10 levels, other non-federal land uses may be less constrained in order to meet air quality standards for the benefit of valley residents.	The land health standards incorporate best management practices for protecting air quality which apply to activities on BLM land. The motorized-vehicle area closures and limiting routes to paved and maintained dirt roads would minimize PM-10 emissions originating from the public lands.	Management of BLM activities which may exceed NAAQ standards would comply with the Clean Air Act and would be affected by consultation with the South Coast Air Quality Management District. However management of activities on BLM-managed public lands would not significantly contribute to resolving PM-10 non-attainment problems in the Coachella Valley.
Noise	Motorized vehicles and <i>wind turbines</i> would generate the most noise from the public lands. Recent wind turbine technology has reduced noise generated and wind turbines must meet County standards for noise levels generated. Off highway vehicles would generate noise affecting nearby residential areas including Snow Creek, Sky Valley and North Shore. This impact is low to residents outside the immediate area due to the remoteness of public lands and relatively low traffic volume passing the areas.	Motorized vehicles and <i>wind turbines</i> would generate the most noise from the public lands. Recent wind turbine technology has reduced noise generated and wind turbines must meet County standards for noise levels generated. Off highway vehicles would generate noise affecting nearby residential areas in North Shore. This impact is low to residents outside the immediate area due to the remoteness of public lands and relatively low traffic volume passing the areas. With a single area of focus, noise impacts would be partly mitigated through law enforcement.	Motorized vehicles and <i>wind turbines</i> would generate the most noise from the public lands. Recent wind turbine technology has reduced noise generated and wind turbines must meet County standards for noise levels generated. Off highway vehicles would not generate noise affecting nearby residential areas at Snow Creek, Sky Valley and North Shore. This overall impact is low due to the remoteness of public lands and relatively low traffic volume passing the areas. Same as Alternative A.	Same as Alternative A.

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Hazardous Materials and Waste	No impact. All activities on BLM lands must comply with Federal, State and local law related to the proper disposal of hazardous and solid wastes.	Same as Alternative A	Same as Alternative A	Same as Alternative A
Visual Resource Management	Within the 91,327 acres of BLM-managed lands designated as VRM Class 1, very limited management activities would be allowed. Substantial protection of visual resources is also afforded to 94,637 acres of BLM-managed lands designated as VRM Class 2—activities on these lands must remain subordinate to the existing landscape, thereby limiting the degree of landscape modification allowed. The greatest flexibility for landscape modifications would be found on the 13,727 acres of BLM-managed lands designated as VRM Class 4 where management activities may be a dominant element of the landscape. Within the 128,350-acre NECO overlap area, no VRM classes are assigned. Impacts in this area are the same as Alternative D.	Same as Alternative A.	Same as Alternative A.	Interim VRM objectives would be established for affected lands on a case-by-case basis when project proposals are submitted to the BLM. VRM objectives would not be known prior to the time actions are proposed. Contrast Ratings that measure the degree of contrast between a proposed activity and the existing landscape would be prepared relative to the interim objectives. Decisions to redesign, abandon or reject, or proceed would be based on the Contrast Rating.

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Utilities	Valid existing rights would be unaffected. New utilities within conservation areas would be subject to mitigation and alignment in conformance with the habitat conservation objectives . Additional mitigation measures may be required to meet those objectives, would result in potentially increased project costs.	Same as Alternative A. In addition, designated wind park areas, communication sites and utility corridors are anticipated to meet the needs of the developing community for at least the next 20 years. The best available wind park and communication sites are already in production and are included in the designations.	Valid existing rights would be unaffected. Restriction of new windparks & communication sites, as well as renewals, would constrain the public land contribution wind power generation and communication site needs which support communities locally and in Southern California. New utility lines would be subject to conformance with the habitat conservation objectives . Additional mitigation measures may be required to meet those objectives, resulting in potentially increased project costs.	Valid existing rights would be unaffected. Requiring new utility projects to be in compliance with the standard suite of environmental laws, including the Endangered Species Act would have no additional impact.
Socio-Economic	<p>Opportunities for future economic development on the public lands would remain substantially unchanged from those currently available.</p> <p>Support to community infrastructure from public lands would continue at current levels, with slight increases in wind power generation, communication site capacity and sand and gravel supplies over time in response to demand.</p> <p>With multiple designated open areas, public lands would absorb more of the off highway vehicle use, reducing vehicle</p>	<p>This alternative provides for future economic development of the BLM-managed lands and makes available resources needed for development for at least the next 20 years.</p> <p>Support to community infrastructure from public lands would continue at current levels, with slight increases in wind power generation, communication site capacity and sand and gravel supplies, over time, in response to demand.</p> <p>With one designated open area, public lands would absorb a portion of the off highway vehicle use. Because most non-federal</p>	<p>This alternative would substantially restrict opportunities for future economic development of the BLM-managed lands</p> <p>Support to community infrastructure from public lands would continue at current levels, in the short term. However, long term supplies for sand and gravel from local public land sources would be constrained. Should adequate local supplies from non-federal lands become inadequate, construction and road maintenance cost would rise to pay the cost of importing material. Energy generation would also be constrained as</p>	Same as Alternative A..

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	<p>use pressure on non-federal lands.</p> <p>Generation of noise and dust by off highway vehicles would affect nearby residential areas including Snow Creek, Sky Valley and North Shore. Dust generation may also contribute to declines in air quality, in turn affecting other land uses in the Coachella Valley.</p>	<p>land OHV use is in the form of free play, an opportunity not readily available at Drop 31, little change in vehicle use pressure on non-federal lands would occur.</p> <p>Off highway vehicles would generate noise and dust affecting nearby residential areas in North Shore. The dust impact would be reduced relative to other areas, given the coarse soils in the traveled washes. The Impact is low to residents outside the immediate area due to the remoteness of the public lands and the relatively low traffic volume passing the area. With a single area of focus, noise and dust impacts would be partly mitigated through law enforcement.</p>	<p>local contributions to energy supply were reduced. However, changes in local supply are unlikely to significantly affect costs to consumers relative to other factors. Communications site availability would also diminish over time. This may create Problems in servicing growing demand if technology change does resolve the issues.</p> <p>With no designated open area, public lands would not absorb any portion of the off highway vehicle use, other than that which occurred in trespass. With enforcement on the federal lands, OHV use pressure would be displaced to non-federal lands.</p> <p>Off highway vehicles would generate noise and dust affecting nearby residential areas in areas removed from public lands. It is difficult to determine which areas and residents in the Coachella Valley would be affected. Enforcement actions by various jurisdictions could move the impact around.</p>	
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